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081015Z Sep 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 005542

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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Leading media (banner in Maariv) reported that the IDF is accelerating its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. At noon, the station reported that the IDF closed the Rafah border crossing, in preparation for the army's pullout and the transfer of the Philadelphi road to Egyptian forces. Israel Radio reported that at a meeting between Israeli representative Amos Gilad and the PA's Muhammad Dahlan and Ghassan Khatib in Jordan on Wednesday, the Palestinians expressed their objection to Israel's proposal that the Rafah crossing should be closed for a six-month renovation period, and that a passage should be set up at Kerem Shalom. The radio says that the Palestinians feel confident in the matter because they sense that the international community is siding with them. Leading media reported that at his meeting with senior ministers Wednesday, PM Sharon agreed to third-party monitoring at the Rafah border crossing; Jerusalem Post writes that Sharon thus becomes the first Israeli leader to agree to international supervision on its borders. Israel Radio quoted visiting French FM Philippe Douste-Blazy as suggesting today that customs officials from the EU be responsible for controlling the Gaza Strip's borders.

Israel Radio reported that the U.S. is demanding that the PA do all it can to keep law and order, and that it welcomes PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas's announcement that he will bring those responsible for Moussa Arafat's assassination to justice and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure. Israel Radio reported that the Popular Resistance Committees revoked their claim of responsibility for the murder. Leading media, which cite humiliating orders given by Moussa Arafat to shave the beards of Hamas activists during a 1996 crackdown, view Hamas as being behind the assassination. Jerusalem Post quoted sources close to Abbas as saying that the assassination of Moussa Arafat could trigger bitter fighting between rival security chiefs and their organizations in the Gaza Strip. Ha'aretz reported that, following the assassination, Abbas canceled his planned trip to New York. Maariv and other media reported on IDF plans to respond to Palestinian terror in proportion to the number of Israelis hurt in attacks. The media quoted IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz as saying before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Wednesday that the army should implement a tougher policy of retaliation against terrorism following the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. Jerusalem Post quoted a "senior Western diplomatic official" as saying Wednesday that Israel is mistaken in believing that, by withdrawing from Gaza, the international community will tolerate all types of military retaliation against rocket fire originating from Gaza.

Yediot led with a comment by a "senior source at the Defense Ministry" that the IDF will do everything -- including thwarting terrorist attacks -- in order to help Sharon win the Likud primaries.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel is demanding that Hamas disarm and abrogate its charter, which calls for the destruction of Israel, as a condition for participating in the elections for the Palestinian National Council, scheduled to take place in January 2006. The newspaper quoted senior Israeli diplomatic sources as saying that the international community is deaf to Israel's pleas. Ha'aretz writes that the only action currently being taken by Israel is raising the issue during diplomatic contacts.

Ha'aretz reported that an analysis of the confidential medical report on Yasser Arafat's death reveals three main possibilities as to the cause: poisoning, AIDS, or an infection. The newspaper quoted Israeli and foreign doctors who have seen the report as saying that the details not lead to a conclusive determination on what caused his death. An Israel Radio anchor said that there does not seem to be anything new in the report. The station later cited a New York Times story as saying that Arafat's medical records show that he died from a stroke that resulted from a bleeding disorder caused by an unidentified infection.

Israel Radio quoted petitioners to the High Court of Justice in the matter of the Gaza Strip synagogues as saying that Israel's request that the Palestinians maintain the synagogues in place was discussed accidentally, when a senior PA minister and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz simultaneously visited Ambassador Dan Kurtzer's residence to offer their condolences over his mother's passing.

Israel Radio reported that the results of the Egyptian presidential elections have not yet been made public. The station also says that the turnout in the vote is still unknown, and that, were it to be small, this could negatively affect the standing of President Hosni Mubarak, who the radio believes will win the elections.

Israel Radio reported that Germany, France, and Britain are expected to turn over the handling of Iran's nuclear program to the UN Security Council, short of asking the Council to impose sanctions on Iran.

Yediot notes that the timing of Sharon's address to the UN General Assembly on September 15 (at 20:00 Israel Time) turns it into an "election speech." In an interview conducted Wednesday with Jerusalem Post, Vice Premier and Labor Party Chairman Shimon Peres firmly ruled out establishing a formal partnership with Sharon to run jointly in the next general elections, essentially quashing speculation over a "big bang" realignment of Israeli politics before the country next goes to the polls.

Israel Radio reported that Jordan Valley settlements have offered relocation to their communities to settlers who were evacuated from the Gaza Strip.

Citing AP, Ha'aretz cited a statement issued Wednesday by the Pakistani Foreign Ministry, which says that Pakistan's talks with Israel last week were aimed at persuading Israel to resolve the Palestinian issue but did not imply recognition.

Yediot and Jerusalem Post cited a travel advisory issued by the counterterrorism department of Israel's National Security Council, which warns Israelis against visiting Morocco, Tunisia, and Pakistan, among other destinations.

Ha'aretz and Yediot reported that the IDF has demanded the resignation of the head rabbis of two hesder yeshivas (in which students combine military service with religious studies) who called on their soldier-students to refuse orders during the disengagement. Leading media reported that Baruch Ben-Menachem (born Bret Taback), a new immigrant from the U.S., who set himself ablaze last Wednesday in protest over Israel's pullout from Gaza, died of his wounds on Tuesday.

Jerusalem Post reported that Bar-Ilan University and the Hebrew University have joined Tel Aviv University in offering students from Tulane University in New Orleans a chance to study in Israel.

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Mideast:  
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#### Summary:

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Territories correspondent Arnon Regular wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Wednesday's killing joins a series of blows suffered by the 'revolutionary' camp associated with Yasser Arafat, which refused to accept the option of an end to the Intifada."

Middle East affairs commentator Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Israel must abandon the perception from the nineties, which reasoned that we must beg every Arab tyrant to meet with us.... Israel must demand an immediate payment for every such encounter."

Nationalist writer Uri Dan commented in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The future danger is of an epidemic of [smuggling] tunnels."

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in Ha'aretz: "It is ... all too possible that if the terror continues ... the officers of the next generation will tell the new team assigned to update the national security doctrine that since Israel is the most dangerous place for a Jew to live, it would be ... safer ... to build a Jewish state in America, say in the empty state of Wyoming."

#### Block Quotes:

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#### I. "Moussa Arafat's Killing Strengthens Moderates"

Territories correspondent Arnon Regular wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (September 8): "It is impossible to say who carried out the hit on Moussa Arafat.... The only question that can be answered now is who gains the most from the assassination. And the answer is Palestinian Minister for Civilian Affairs Muhammad Dahlan, the patron of the Preventative Security apparatus, and its head, Rashid Abu-Shabak, who for the past two years have been waging a sophisticated war to the death against Moussa Arafat and his late patron, Yasser Arafat.... But the matter is not merely a personal one between Dahlan and Abu-Shabak, and Moussa Arafat. Wednesday's killing joins a series of blows suffered by the 'revolutionary' camp associated with Yasser Arafat, which refused to accept the option of an end to the Intifada.... The killing is also another stage in the consolidation and strengthening of the central stream in the PA that recognizes the importance of putting an end to the Intifada, embarking on a political struggle and implementing the reforms in the PA in an effort to make progress on the road map peace plan."

#### II. "Pointless Signs of Relations"

Middle East affairs commentator Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (September 8): "Arab and Muslim states have always taken advantage of Israel in order to establish better relations with the U.S.... They have no real interest in Israel, her economy, or people.... Since public opinion in the Arab and Muslim worlds is so hostile to Israel, no Arab leader will dare endanger his stability and come to Israel itself or to establish formal diplomatic ties with it. Israeli readers have no idea how big hatred for Israel is in the Arab street, and how badly the Palestinians have turned their public opinion against Israel during five years of Intifada. When will an Arab leader come to Israel or make peace with her? Only when things become critical and this is the last option left for their survival.... Israel must abandon the perception from the nineties, which reasoned that we must beg every Arab tyrant to meet with us, and understand that Pakistan isn't doing Israel a favor when it exacts a price for a photo-op.... Israel must demand an immediate payment for every such encounter, in the form of full diplomatic relations or in exchange for another political gesture. Israel has always volunteered to care for others in the first place, without understanding that the opposite is true in the Middle East -- as in the famous Arabic proverb: 'People won't respect those who don't respect themselves.'"

#### III. "Tomorrow's Tunnels"

Nationalist writer Uri Dan commented in popular, pluralist Maariv (September 8): "The IDF may have had no alternative to relinquishing the Philadelphia axis and handing over its protection from smuggling to the Egyptian army {'Border Guard'}) that would deploy along

the border. But no claim is more stupid and more miserable than the assertion: 'What does it matter? Smuggling took place when we were in Jericho, and will take place when the Gaza harbor opens, too.' This would be similar to the police claiming it has no means to fight the carnage on the roads, because traffic accidents would occur anyway.... The Palestinians have already turned the [smuggling] tunnels into a strategic weapon. Their success along the Philadelphi axis encourages them to go on digging tunnels beyond the Gaza Strip in the direction of Israeli communities in the south of the country, and ... everywhere throughout Israel.... The future danger is of an epidemic of tunnels."

#### IV. "Cheaper and Safer in Wyoming"

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in Ha'aretz (September 8): "'The territory of Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank], and the Golan as well, has no security importance.' The statement appears in not just another original revelation, or new post-Zionist manifesto. This statement, Maariv reported in an exclusive story last Friday, is the conclusion reached by a high-ranking forum that is redrafting the security conception of Israel.... The new narrative is the embodiment of Israel's transition from a value-based ideological society to a materialistic, impatient society that charts its route on the basis of numerical data and balances of power. It is therefore all too possible that if the terror continues -- and when you run away from it, there is no reason it will not intensify -- the officers of the next generation will tell the new team assigned to update the national security doctrine that since Israel is the most dangerous place for a Jew to live, it would be cheaper, and most certainly safer -- as one American statesman once half-joked -- to build a Jewish state in America, say in the empty state of Wyoming. This would once and for all end the problem the Jews make for themselves and the world by their (temporary) insistence on having their state in, of all places, the Land of Israel."

KURTZER